

5.8 Visual Resources

5.8.1 Introduction

The Visual Resources section of the EIR analyzes the potential short-term, long-term, and cumulative impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the Project and alternatives. The visual resources discussion will analyze the visual resources conditions in the proposed Shingle Springs Interchange area.

5.8.2 Environmental Setting

The project site is located approximately 3 miles (4.8 km) east of the Shingle Springs community and 5 miles (8 km) west of the City of Placerville. The land uses surrounding the project site can best be characterized as rural residential. There are no sensitive receptors within the immediate vicinity of the interchange project site (as seen from Highway 50).

Existing Interchanges

This section presents information regarding the existing interchanges that occur east and west of the project site. For purposes of this discussion, all interchanges located west of the project site to the El Dorado County line are presented, as well as all existing interchanges east of the project site to the City of Placerville. The intent is to provide information about the type of interchanges that have been constructed and associated land uses surrounding these facilities. The El Dorado County line is located approximately 11 miles (18 km) west of the project site.

The main communities within this area include El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park and Shingle Springs. There are 6 interchanges on Highway 50 within this 11-mile (18 km) distance. Two of the existing interchanges contain aboveground diamond type structures: (1) Cambridge Road, and (2) North Shingle Road/Motherlode Drive. The remaining interchanges contain no above ground structures.

Traveling east of the project site, there are 4 interchanges between the site and the City of Placerville. Three of the four interchanges contain aboveground diamond type structures: (1) El Dorado Road, (2) Diamond Springs/Missouri Flat Road, and (3) Forni Road/Placerville Drive. The fourth interchange contains no above ground structure. **Tables 5.8-1** and **5.8-2** list the existing interchanges located west and east of the project site.

Appendix J provides a topographic map and pictures of each of interchange that contains above ground structures. Also included within **Appendix J** are photos that show the commercial and/or residential development located near the interchanges and Highway 50.

Table 5.8-1 Interchanges West Of Project Site

Interchange	Miles from Project Site (kilometers)	Type of Interchange
El Dorado Hills Boulevard	10.7 (17.2)	Undercrossing with no above ground structures.
Bass Lake Road	8.2 (13.2)	Undercrossing with no above ground structures.
Cambridge Road	6.6 (10.6)	Diamond interchange.
Cameron Park Drive	4.8 (7.7)	Undercrossing with no above ground structures.
North Shingle Road/Motherlode Drive	3 (4.8)	Diamond Interchange.
Shingle Springs Drive	1.2 (1.9)	Undercrossing with no above ground structures.

Source: AES, 2001

Note: Interchanges to the west on Highway 50 to the El Dorado Border

Table 5.8-2 Interchanges East Of Project Site

Interchange	Miles from Project Site (kilometers)	Type of Interchange
Forni Road/Placerville Drive	4.8 (7.7)	Diamond Interchange.
Diamond Springs/Missouri Flat Road	3.8 (6.1)	Diamond Interchange.
El Dorado Road	2.7 (4.3)	Diamond interchange.
Greenstone Road	1 (1.6)	Undercrossing with no above ground structures.

Source: AES, 2001

Note: Interchanges to the east on Highway 50 to the City of Placerville.

Existing Views Leading To The Proposed Interchange Site

The project site is located within the rolling foothills of the Sierra Nevada, and as such, the view of the project site from Highway 50 is confined to a relatively small distance. The highway contains numerous changes in vertical distance as one approaches the proposed interchange site from both the east and west. A site visit conducted by AES staff reveals that as one approaches the project site from the west, the ridge top (near the interchange location) can be seen in the distance approximately 1 mile to the west. Approaching the site from the east, the interchange site can be seen approximately 1.0 mile (1.6 km) from the site. **Figure 5.8-1** shows the site distance east and west along Highway 50 where the project site would be visible. Adjacent uses along this stretch of Highway 50 were noted to determine the existence of sensitive land uses. The vast majority of the land adjacent to the 2-mile (3.2 km) view corridor of Highway 50 contains no sensitive receptors. There are a few houses southeast of the project site that could possibly see the project site in the distance.

Existing Views From Proposed Interchange Site

Figure 5.8-2 provides a panoramic view of the surrounding land uses as viewed from a spot immediately north of Highway 50 where the interchange will be located. As can be seen from

See **Figure 5.8-1**

See Figure 5.8-2

Figure 5.8-2, the view west of the project site consists of the Highway 50 cut banks and the ridge of Highway 50 that drops off topographically traveling west towards Shingle Springs Drive. There is dense vegetative coverage and no visible structures on the ridges looking west.

The view looking north from the proposed interchange site shows dense vegetative cover that essentially blocks the northerly view a short distance from the Highway. No structures are visible from the northerly view.

The view looking east of the proposed interchange site drops off into the foothills leading to the City of Placerville located approximately 5 miles (8 km) from the project site. The Sierra Nevada mountain range can be seen in the distance. There are several houses on the ridge top just south of this view that are barely visible in the distance.

The view looking south of the proposed interchange site is limited due to the existing vegetative canopy coverage and vertical drop-off of the land as one moves south away from the project site. A ridge top of the foothills can be seen in the distance. No structures are visible from this view.

Existing Urbanized Development In The Project Vicinity

There are many businesses that are adjacent to Highway 50 between the Shingle Springs community and City of Placerville. At Missouri Flat Road and Highway 50 east of Placerville (approximately 4 miles/6.5 km northeast of the project site), there are businesses on the north and south sides of Highway 50. Prospector's Plaza is on the north side of Highway 50. This shopping center consists of three large retail stores (e.g., K-Mart), various shops, and four banks. The development has a setback of less than 50 feet (15 meters) from Highway 50 and has two-story structures on the site. A restaurant (Eppies), motel (Best Western), and church (Placerville Seventh Day Adventist Church) are on the south side of Highway 50. The church has a setback of less than 50 feet (15 meters) from Highway 50 and is taller than a two-story building. Eppies and Best Western Motel each have a setback of approximately 100 yards (91 meters) from Highway 50 and the Best Western Motel is three stories high.

At El Dorado Road and Highway 50 (approximately 2.7 miles/4.3 km east of the project site), there is a Homebuilders Outlet on the north side of Highway 50 and an El Dorado Savings Bank on the south side. The Homebuilders Outlet has a setback of approximately 50 yards

(46 meters) from Highway 50 and the El Dorado Savings Bank has a setback of approximately 100 yards (91 meters) from Highway 50 and is two-stories high.

At North Shingle Road and Highway 50 in Shingle Springs (approximately 3 miles/5 km west of the project site), there are businesses on the north and south sides of the freeway. On the north side of Highway 50 is Sports Central, Sentry Storage, Shingle Springs Nissan/Subaru/Kia, and Shingle Springs Chrysler/Plymouth/ Dodge. All the businesses mentioned above each have a setback of approximately 50 yards (46 meters) from Highway 50 and are two-stories in height. On the south side of Highway 50, there is the Gold Harvest Market, a commercial business district, and two other commercial business developments adjacent to Highway 50. The Gold Harvest Center has a setback of less than 50 feet (15 meters) from Highway 50 and is two-stories high. The commercial business district (east of Ponderosa Road) has various service-oriented businesses that are directly adjacent to Highway 50 (less than 50 feet/15 meters). Some of these businesses are two-stories in height. The two other commercial business developments adjacent to Highway 50 (west of Ponderosa Road) are comprised of three two-story structures. Two of them are brick and one is a log cabin. Each provides a variety of retail- and service-related businesses. Each of these developments has a setback of less than 50 feet (15 meters) from Highway 50 and is two-stories in height.

5.8.3 Regulatory Setting

Highway 50 is officially designated as a State Scenic Highway from Placerville eastward to South Lake Tahoe. The designated highway begins at Post Mile 16.78 near the eastern limit of the government center buildings. The project site, and highway view corridor leading to the project site are located outside of the boundaries of the designated highway.

5.8.4 Impacts And Mitigation Measures

Significance Criteria

A visual resource impact would exist if the project would result in any of the following, which are adapted from CEQA *Guidelines*.

- Result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista,
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway,
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime view in the area.

Methodology

Potential visual impacts were assessed. The physical attributes of the project alternatives are analyzed from three views – westward, eastward, and northward – with photo simulations presenting visual reference.

Impact/ Mitigation

Impact 5.8-1 Impacts To Visual Resources

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| AA | Under the No Project/Action Alternative, the interchange would not be constructed; therefore, no visual change would occur on or around the project site. <i>No impact</i> will result from the No Project/Action Alternative. |
| AB, AC | There are two vantage points for the Fly-Over Interchange Design Alternative and the Diamond Interchange Design Alternative. (1) westward view, and (2) eastward view. Photo simulations have been developed to depict the two types of interchange alternatives. |

As can be seen from the vantage points presented in **Figures 4-1** and **4-2**, the Flyover Interchange would introduce a new urban feature (i.e., interchange) into the environment.

As the eastbound traveler approaches the ridge of the project site, the bridge structure would come into view. An open view to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada will be off in the distance. This interrupted view of the Sierra Nevada would only occur for a short traveling distance. This is due to the fact that the rolling nature of Highway 50 in the vicinity of the project site only brings the mountains into view when the crest of the ridge top is reached. Within seconds of traveling time, the view would be uninterrupted as the eastbound traveler crosses under the bridge. The interrupted view of the mountain range in the distance is considered to be so brief that it is not considered a significant impact on a scenic vista/resource.

The westbound traveler would have a longer uninterrupted view of the new interchange than the eastbound traveler. This is due to the uphill nature of the westbound approach, and the fact that the interchange structure is located on the eastern side of the ridge top. The most dominate view on the westbound approach is the Highway 50 cut bank that was engineered to make way for the

highway alignment. Although the interchange is considered a new urban feature for westbound travelers, it is considered to be a less than significant impact upon the scenic vista/resource.

Retaining Walls. Another feature of the project design is the development retaining walls on the south side of the highway and a scaling back of the cut bank on the north side of the highway. Retaining walls will be required between Route 50 and the eastbound off-ramp and between the eastbound off-ramp and the right-of-way line. The lower retaining wall, between the existing eastbound lanes on Route 50 and the eastbound off-ramp, will be approximately 640 feet (195m) long and will vary from 2.7 feet (0.8m) high to 28 feet (8.5m) high. The upper retaining wall, between the eastbound off-ramp and the right-of-way line along the south side of Route 50 will be approximately 426 feet (130m) and will vary from 2.7 feet (0.8m) high to 30 feet (9.2m) high. The concrete used to construct the retaining walls will be tinted to further blend the retaining wall into the surrounding rock. Neither the north or south cut banks on Highway 50 are considered to be scenic rock outcroppings. They exist due to the construction of Highway 50 which created the cut banks to make room for the roadway. A *less-than-significant impact* is expected given that the retaining walls will not be in a visually sensitive area and that treatment of the walls will result in compatibility with the surrounding landscape.

Lighting. Lighting will be required in the areas where the off-ramps diverge from Route 50, where the on-ramps merge with Route 50, and in the area where the on and off-ramps converge together north of Route 50. Lighting for the proposed interchange will incorporate all applicable lighting ordinances. Caltrans lighting standards and mast arms will be implemented, consistent with Caltrans Type 15 (Standard Plan ES-6A), on any lighting structures that are within the Caltrans right-of-way. Additionally, flush soffit luminaires (Caltrans Standard Plan ES-9F) will be provided on the undercrossing structure, where the eastbound on-ramp passes under Route 50 for safety purposes. Low intensity lighting will also be provided on the underside of bridge rails, to illuminate the aesthetic treatment of the railing, which will not illuminate the roadway or the surrounding areas. Any lighting associated with the interchange after the Caltrans right-of-way will comply with El Dorado County lighting ordinance (17.14.170), which limits artificial light and glare and restricts unnecessary illumination of adjacent properties. Specific

requirements include hooded or screened outdoor lighting so as to direct the source of light downward and focus onto the property from which it originates, top and side shielded outdoor lights, and limitations regarding hours and the degree to which lights can exceed below the horizontal plane. Given the above standards that will apply to the interchange lighting, a *less-than-significant* impact will result.

As can be seen from the vantage points presented in **Figures 4-3** and **4-4**, the Diamond Alternative would introduce a new urban feature (i.e., interchange) into the environment.

The Diamond Alternative would result in an alteration of the visual character of the project area. The visual effect of the Diamond Alternative would be more pronounced when compared with the Flyover Alternative; however, for all of the reasons stated for the Flyover Alternative, the Diamond Alternative is not expected to result in a significant impact.

As noted in the Regulatory Setting discussion, the project site does not exist within a state scenic highway; therefore, a less than significant impact will exist.

The Flyover Interchange Design Alternative and the Diamond Interchange Design Alternative are not expected to result in a significant impact to visual resources.

Mitigation 5.8-1 Impacts To Visual Resources

None Required.

Impact 5.8-2 Cumulative Impacts to Visual Resources

AA Under the No Project/Action Alternative, the interchange would not be constructed; therefore, no visual change would occur on or around the project site. ***No impact*** would occur under the No Project/Action Alternative.

AB, AC The roadway network surrounding the project site is assumed to remain the same for cumulative conditions as currently exist for existing conditions. There are no programmed improvements for Highway 50 for cumulative conditions; therefore, a 4-lane facility is assumed for cumulative conditions in the vicinity of the project site. ***Alternatives B and C will not add to altered***

cumulative conditions for visual resources along the highway. The visual effects of constructing a hotel and casino on the Rancheria are detailed in Chapter 9 of this EIR/EA.

Mitigation 5.8-2 Cumulative Impacts to Visual Resources

None Required.